

REMARKS

Claims 18-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Freeman et al. ('091). By this amendment, claims 18, 26, 34 and 35 have been amended to better define the present invention.

Freeman et al. describe a system for providing interactive television program viewing, by way of a system for combining and decoding multiple digital data streams in a single television transmission channel. The system implements signal selection capability to allow a viewer, utilizing the external interface, to provide information to be used either locally or at the source transmission point to customize the information displayed at the user's receiving point. In an alternative embodiment, the system can switch between information streams on different transmission channels, thereby widening the range of signals available for the customizing process, and, therefore, the range of possible results of the customizing process.

Freeman et al. describe two implementations of the system. In the first case, a single transmission channel is configured to provide a plurality of multiplexed signals, and the receiver/decoder device is enabled to retrieve these signals either as independent signals, or as primary signals which are enhanced by user-controlled combination with one or more of the secondary signals. The encoding process is depicted in Figures 1 and 2; the decoding process is depicted in Figures 3 and 5.

In the second embodiment, signals from a first transmission channel are used in combination with signals on a second transmission channel. As an example, Figure 4 depicts an RF-based system, utilizing two tuners, the outputs of which are combined in accordance with the user selection information.

However, it is clear from all of the descriptions, and from all of the Figures, that the system is designed to operate only over a single transmission medium. For example, the encoding system depicted in Figure 1 combines multiple signal sources 1 at multiplexer 4, which are modulated in the transmitter 5 and provided to the single transmission medium 6. In the bi-directional system of Figure 2, multiple signal sources 1 are combined in central switching station 14, under operator control signals entered at the controller 9. These signals are then modulated in the transmitter 5 and provided to the single transmission medium 6.

Similarly, the decoder system of Figure 3, representing the first embodiment, utilizes a single RF demodulator 102 to recover the transmitted signal(s), while the decoder system of Figure 4 (representing the second embodiment) utilizes multiple RF demodulators 102A and 102B (one for each transmission channel), both of which receive their signals from a single source input.

Where Freeman et al. do disclose alternative transmission media, it is always in a context of all signals being received solely through that single medium. For example, while speaking in reference to bi-directional transmission systems, Freeman et al. state (col. 3, lines 20-25): "This embodiment may be used in a cable television system, a direct broadcast satellite system, a conventional telephone system modified to receive digital video signals, or any other appropriate transmission system capable of sending digital video signals."

Thus, Freeman et al. do not in any way suggest employing multiple signal delivery paths or media. All of the teachings of Freeman et al. are directed towards a system which, while applicable to a variety of media, always uses only a single medium for transmission of the video signals.

Applicant believes all claims are in condition for allowance. Questions regarding this application should be directed to the undersigned attorney at the telephone/facsimile numbers provided.

A version showing the changes made to the amended claims is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADEIN THE CLAIMS:

18. (Amended) A method of automatically changing [a TV channel] to an alternate transmission medium at a TV viewer location, comprising the steps of:

entering, at the viewer location, information regarding a viewing preference; [and]

receiving a TV program at the viewer location over a first transmission medium; and

transmitting, from a broadcaster to the viewer location, ^{a TV program} ~~a TV program~~ ^{and} including a pointer that ^{was} ~~automatically switches~~ [the TV program that the viewer is watching to another program] to the alternate transmission medium based on the information entered by the viewer.

26. (Amended) A method of directing an automatic channel changing function at a viewer location to achieve a cohesive viewing environment, comprising the steps of:

providing a channel selector at a viewer location; and

transmitting, from a broadcaster to the viewing location, a TV program on a primary [TV channel] transmission medium the program including additional information for directing the channel selector to automatically switch, at least temporarily, to one or more secondary [TV channels] transmission media.

34. (Amended) A television viewing system, comprising:

a source of an audio/video TV program including a channel-change command; and

equipment at a TV viewing location remote from the source, [the equipment] including a channel selector and circuitry operative to perform the following functions:

receive the TV program,
detect the channel-change command, and
automatically select a different [station] transmission medium to the channel-change command.

35. (Amended) The system of claim 34, further including:
a device for inputting descriptive information by a viewer; and
wherein the multi-channel tuner is also changed to a different station as a function of the descriptive information in response to the channel-change command.